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SUBJECT: ANDHRA PRADESH ANTI-MAOIST STRATEGY SUCCESSFUL, BUT TOUGH  
TO REPLICATE

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The South India state Andhra Pradesh, which was once a hotbed of Maoist activity, has made substantial progress in quelling the leftist insurgency within its borders. The state's success can be attributed to improved governance, both in terms of more effective policing and the delivery of welfare programs to economically backward rural areas. The centerpiece of the state's policing strategy is an elite anti-Maoist paramilitary unit that uses jungle-warfare methods and a strong intelligence network to eliminate insurgents in the state. But the unit's heavy-handed tactics have led to credible concerns over human rights violations. The state also encourages Maoist insurgents to lay down their arms and return to society through a forgiving surrender policy. Years of Maoist violence against innocent civilians has led to a backlash against the leftists, further strengthening the government's hand. The state's recent economic boom has also eroded the appeal of Maoist ideology, especially in the once fertile ground of the state's university campuses. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The state of Andhra Pradesh, located in South India, is one of the historic centers of the Maoist (also known as Naxalite) insurgency that has plagued India since 1967. Although the insurgency originated in West Bengal, it quickly took root in northwest Andhra Pradesh. After decades of guerilla violence, the state began during the 1990s an aggressive campaign against the Maoists, and is now considered one of India's most successful states in terms of controlling the insurgency (refs C and D). On an August 25 - 26 visit to Andhra Pradesh, Manpreet S. Anand, Professional Staff Member, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Political/Economic Officer met with a range of contacts from government, the police, the media, and civil society to discuss the state of the insurgency and lessons learned from the Andhra Pradesh response.

State of the Maoist insurgency in Andhra Pradesh

¶3. (SBU) Our interlocutors generally agreed that the state is succeeding in diminishing the insurgency. Police and government interlocutors appeared uniformly confident. Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence) Aravinda Rao told Anand that the Maoists "are not a major threat" to Andhra Pradesh. When pressed about the difficulties that the states to the north are experiencing, Rao said "Chhattisgarh is doing much better" but acknowledged that "more work needs to be done" in Orissa and Jharkhand. Andhra Pradesh, he emphasized, has more than twenty years experience fighting the Maoists. The other states are new to counter-insurgency but are making fast progress, according to Rao, and he has no doubt that "the force of the Indian state will contain the Maoists."

¶4. (SBU) Anand and Political/Economic Officer traveled to Andhra Pradesh's Warangal district. Located approximately 140 kilometers northeast of Hyderabad, Warangal was once a center of Maoist activity in the state. Srinivas Reddy, Deputy Bureau Chief for The Hindu, said that during the 1980s and early 1990s Maoists "openly moved about" the district without fear of the authorities.

Warangal's District Collector and Superintendent of Police said that Maoists no longer pose a major problem in the district. District Collector Janardhan Reddy said Maoists "are hardly visible" anymore.

Superintendent of Police V.C. Sajjanar said he did not consider Maoists to be a serious problem; instead he focused on traditional issues like street crime and the maintenance of law and order. They did, however, disagree on the degree to which the Maoists are still present in Warangal. Reddy said there are no Maoist-affected villages in the district, but according to Sajjanar ten to fifteen percent of the district's total surface area, primarily in the forested part close to the Chhattisgarh border, is Maoist-affected.

¶5. (SBU) Rao said that there are 200 underground, armed Maoists in Andhra Pradesh and roughly 6,000 throughout India. Sajjanar, on the other hand, told Anand that there are "probably 100" Maoists in Warangal district alone. (Note: Given that Warangal is one of several Maoist-affected districts in Andhra Pradesh, it is difficult to reconcile Sajjanar's estimate of 100 Maoists in Warangal district with Rao's figure of 200 for the whole state. End note.) Sajjanar shared several albums of photos of Maoists that the police believe operate in Warangal district. According to Sajjanar, the photos were seized in raids or given to the police by surrendered Maoists. Political/Economic Officer counted photos of 62 different alleged Maoists, 28 of whom were women. The Maoists were typically pictured in military fatigues in forested settings. In most of the pictures

CHENNAI 00000322 002 OF 004

the Maoists carried rifles, some of which were identified as AK-47s by the police officer who was showing the photos. In one series of photos a group of approximately ten Maoists, all carrying weapons, were pictured standing at attention in formation.

Improved governance - carrots and sticks

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¶6. (SBU) The importance of improving governance was a common thread throughout our discussions in Andhra Pradesh. The civilian administrator emphasized the importance of delivering government services to rural areas whereas police officers focused on implementing effective policing strategies. Warangal District Collector Janardhan Reddy said that "governance is key" to the state's efforts to combat the Maoists. He listed a litany of government welfare programs that have helped reduce the appeal of Maoist ideology, including education (he claimed that 100% of children under 14 years old in the district are enrolled in school), health care, insurance set up through state-sponsored "self-help groups," housing programs, and publicly funded irrigation projects. Reddy did, however, admit that "the quality of service delivery has to be improved." Reddy also spent a good deal of time talking about the importance of bureaucratic accountability and responsiveness to the public's demands. He said the district has focused on "responding to the needs of the vulnerable Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" by increasing opportunities for these communities to participate in the democratic process. Reddy pointed out that, going down to the village-level, there are 10,000 to 15,000 elected representatives in the district. "All of these participatory channels mean that people don't need to resort to alternative methods to express their grievances," Reddy said, clearly alluding to the Maoists.

Not just carrots, but also sticks: the Greyhounds

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¶7. (SBU) In contrast to the various inducements Reddy described, police officers focused on the sticks rather than the carrots. Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence) Rao, who began his career as a young officer in Warangal district in the 1980s, was dismissive of the development-oriented approach described by

Janardhan Reddy. He said the problem in India's Maoist-affected areas is not development but the "absence of the writ of law." Rao said that "if the people see that the police don't come to their village they will turn to the Maoists, but if the police are present they will not."

¶8. (SBU) Rao said the state's elite anti-Maoist unit, known as the "Greyhounds," will contain the insurgency. The Greyhounds, India's first unit designed especially to combat the Maoist insurgency, are not a typical Indian police unit. In an August 2007 meeting the Greyhounds chief explained that the Greyhounds have recruiting standards equivalent to India's elite military units, train for independent jungle warfare operations, are equipped with the best weapons, and are paid a substantial premium for their service in the unit. The Greyhounds also have a sophisticated intelligence operation that includes a wide network of informants (refs C and D). Human rights lawyer K. Balagopal told Anand and Political/Economic officer that the success of the Greyhounds is largely due to the information it receives from informants who have turned against the Maoists due to the insurgents' increasingly heavy-handed tactics.

¶9. (SBU) The Greyhounds emphasize killing, rather than capturing suspected Maoists. In what are known as "combing" operations, Greyhounds units search patches of thickly forested regions for Maoists based on intelligence leads, living in the forests for days at a time, operating in small, independent units, seeking out Maoist insurgents and engaging them in firefights. The Greyhounds are also known for "encounter killings," an Indian euphemism to describe an extrajudicial killing of a suspected Maoist (or criminal), where the police stage the scene so it appears that the victim attempted to escape police custody or was going to shoot a police officer. Srinivas Reddy of The Hindu said that at least 60 percent of the Maoists killed in Andhra Pradesh die in "encounter killings." Rao flatly denied the possibility that the recent ambush which killed more than 30 Greyhounds (ref A) indicates that the Maoists have gained an upper hand. He said they are analyzing all that went wrong but that it is "quite clear that the unit had made several mistakes," which led to the successful Maoist ambush. He said the ambush would not deter the Greyhounds from continuing to conduct cross-border operations in neighboring states (ref b).

CHENNAI 00000322 003 OF 004

Surrender policy helps pull Maoists back into society

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¶10. (SBU) Warangal Superintendent of Police Sajjanar said that Maoists "regularly" surrender, which is the result of a deliberate policy designed to encourage Maoists to give themselves up. The policy as Sajjanar described is quite forgiving and applies to Maoists except the insurgents' most senior leaders, who are believed to be so ideologically committed that they are very unlikely to surrender. Sajjanar said the Maoists who typically surrender are people who joined the insurgency for "understandable reasons," such as extreme poverty, family problems, or caste-based oppression in their villages. Maoists who surrender are not punished; they are sent back to their home villages to be reintegrated into society. They receive help in securing employment and, if there was a reward for their capture, the surrendering Maoist receives the reward. Sajjanar said that the police do debrief the Maoists upon surrender for any useful information and they monitor their activities after reintegration.

Backlash against Maoists helps the cause

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¶11. (SBU) K. Balagopal, who has represented accused Maoists and is openly sympathetic to their cause, admitted that the insurgents' excesses have led to popular backlash against the movement. Balagopal noted that the majority of those killed by the Maoists are poor people wrongly accused of being police informants. He attributed the lack of discipline on the part of the Maoists to a breakdown in their vetting process. "Before the cadre was driven by ideology, but now many are just rowdies," he said. Between the "the alienation of local people" generated by the Maoist violence and the police's willingness to offer generous amounts of money to

informants, Balagopal said it is no surprise that the police have obtained a good deal of actionable intelligence against the Maoists.

He added that "an armed movement requires social support." Looking dejected, Balagopal told Anand and Political/Economic Officer that "we hoped they [the Maoists] would see that they were alienating themselves from their supporters and reduce the violence, but quite the opposite has happened."

Economic growth lessens Maoist appeal

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¶12. (SBU) Andhra Pradesh's growing prosperity, largely fueled by information and biotechnology, has also helped in the fight against the Maoists. Much of the economic growth has taken place in and around Hyderabad, which is just a short drive from the state's areas of Maoist activity. Proximity to prosperity is lessening the appeal of Maoist ideology, especially to young people. Srinivas Reddy, Deputy Bureau Chief for The Hindu, said that at India's universities -- once the Maoist's prime recruiting grounds -- there is little interest in leftist ideology: "young people want to go to school, get a job at Oracle, or get an H-1B (visa) and go to the U.S." K. Balagopal, an opponent of liberalizing India's economy, grudgingly agreed, noting that Indian youth "are more interested in material wealth," but added that neo-liberal economic policies are creating more support for the Maoists among dispossessed rural Indians.

Dissenting voice says "U.S. should be worried"

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¶13. (SBU) Srinivas Reddy, Deputy Bureau Chief for The Hindu, sounded a discordant view against the general consensus that Andhra Pradesh has a good handle on the insurgency. Reddy, who has followed the Maoists in Andhra Pradesh for more than a decade, started the conversation by saying "the U.S. should be worried" about the Maoists because they "are a real threat to Indian sovereignty." Reddy said "New Delhi is focused on the troubles in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir; it has not mounted a serious response to the Maoists." He added that although the Maoists are at war against the Indian state, their propaganda fixes a great deal of attention on "U.S. imperialism." According to Reddy, the Maoists will not, however, attack U.S. interests in India for fear of drawing the United States into the conflict.

¶14. (SBU) Reddy said the Maoists have ample funding and weaponry to continue the fight. He said "money is no problem, they get more than enough from the MNCs (multinational corporations) and their subcontractors," who pay protection money for the right to do business in Maoist areas. Reddy also argued that the Maoists have no trouble arming themselves. The Maoists seize most of what they need from the police, Reddy said, citing as an example the February 2008 Maoist raid of a government armory in Nayagarh, Orissa which

CHENNAI 00000322 004 OF 004

netted the insurgents at least 600 weapons. Reddy added that the Maoists can easily purchase weapons in India's Northeast states.

¶15. (SBU) Police contacts, though confident that the state is beating the Maoists, echoed Reddy's sentiment that Maoists have ample funding and the ability to acquire enough weapons. Warangal Superintendent of Police V.C. Sajjanar said mining companies pay protection money to the Maoists; Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence) Rao mentioned the forestry industry. Rao also agreed with Reddy that the Maoists source weapons from the Northeast states. He said the Maoists have obtained weapons from the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).

¶16. (SBU) Reddy also criticized the idea that Andhra Pradesh's paramilitary-based approach is an effective solution for the rest of India. "The Greyhounds are a myth," he said. "It took thirty years for Andhra Pradesh to get to this point." But it is "not replicable," because Chhattisgarh and Orissa do not have the time or resources it takes to build up a Greyhounds-like unit.

Comment: success at the cost of human rights

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¶17. (SBU) Comment: There is no doubt that Andhra Pradesh has had success against the Maoist insurgency, much more so than the other affected states. It has done so through the application of brute force, the use of intelligence, and by delivering welfare measures to the rural parts of the state. The state's economic boom, though largely happening in urban Hyderabad, has helped by depriving the Maoists of vital support among the youth in universities. But the state's success came at a price: the tacit acceptance by the body politic of extrajudicial killings of suspected Maoists allows the state to fundamentally disregard basic human rights.

Comment: Andhra Pradesh a difficult model to replicate

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¶18. (SBU) Comment continued. Putting aside the desirability of the security/human rights tradeoff that Andhra Pradesh has made, the other Maoist-affected states may lack the administrative capabilities and, more critically, the time to implement the Andhra Pradesh model. Andhra Pradesh's Greyhounds have achieved a level of sophistication far beyond that of the vast majority of Indian police and paramilitary units. Moreover, Andhra Pradesh's relatively strong bureaucracy and vast budgets give it the ability to implement a wide array of welfare programs throughout the state. Finally, the state's political leadership, particularly former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, made defeating the Maoist insurgency one of the state's primary goals. But even with these elements in place, it took more than twenty years for Andhra Pradesh to reach this point, and the threat has not been eradicated. Indian policy makers may be looking to Andhra Pradesh as their model, but the record there indicates that victory against the Maoists is not likely to come in the immediate future. End comment.

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